VIENNA, AUSTRIA
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REGIONAL MEETING FOR AFRICA, TUNIS, TUNISIA, 2-6 NOVEMBER 1992

As part of the preparatory process for the World Conference on Human Rights in June, United Nations Member States were asked by the General Assembly to hold regional meetings to exchange views and highlight human rights concerns specific to the region. Non-governmental organizations, observers, intergovernmental and United Nations bodies also participated in the discussions. The following "Tunis Declaration" represents the collective views of African countries.

Tunis Declaration on Human Rights

The Ministers and representatives of the African States meeting at Tunis from 2 to 6 November 1992, in the context of preparations for the World Conference on Human Rights and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/116 of 17 December 1991,

Considering the importance of the forthcoming World Conference on Human Rights, which is taking place at a time characterized by major changes on the international scene,

Considering the priority that is increasingly being attached to the protection and promotion of human rights among the concerns of the international community,

Convinced that the dumping of toxic wastes in Africa constitutes a violation of the collective human rights of the populations of Africa,

Noting with satisfaction the advances in standard-setting in the field of human rights and the progress achieved in their implementation throughout the world,

Recognizing, however, the existence of difficulties, both endogenous and exogenous, which are delaying or impeding satisfactory implementation of human rights at the universal level,

Considering that one of the aims of the World Conference on Human Rights is to identify these difficulties and recommend the measures which must be taken nationally and internationally to overcome them,

Aware of the value of the discussions which will take place during the World Conference on Human Rights, and of the impact of its conclusions on the direction of future activities of the United Nations in this sphere,

Desiring to contribute to the success of the World Conference and to ensure that the international community shares African concerns regarding the promotion of human rights and development,

Adopt the present declaration, to be known as the Tunis Declaration, which reflects both their convictions and their expectations:

1. The African States reaffirm their commitment to the principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;

2. The universal nature of human rights is beyond question; their protection and promotion are the duty of all States, regardless of their political, economic or cultural systems;

3. The proper administration of justice and an independent judiciary are crucial to the full realization of human rights. The attainment of these objectives is, however, impossible without substantial investment in the area of the administration of justice. The African States and the international community are, therefore, called upon to allocate more resources to this area;

4. Responsibility for the implementation and promotion of human rights devolves primarily on Governments. The component institutions, organizations and structures of society also play an important role in safeguarding and disseminating these rights; they should therefore be strengthened and encouraged;

5. The observance and promotion of human rights are undeniably a global concern and an objective to the realization of which all States, without exception, are called upon to contribute. However, no ready-made model can be prescribed at the universal level since the historical and cultural realities of each nation and the traditions, standards and values of each people cannot be disregarded;

6. The principle of the indivisibility of human rights is sacrosanct. Civil and political rights cannot be dissociated from economic, social and cultural rights. None of these rights takes precedence over the others;

7. Political freedom when not accompanied by respect for economic, social and cultural rights is precarious. The right to development is inalienable. Human rights, development and international peace are interdependent;

8. Lasting progress towards the implementation of human rights implies, at the national level, effective development policies and, at the international level, more equitable economic rela-

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tions, as well as a favourable economic environment;

9. Racism, particularly its new forms, extremism and fanaticism, whether of religious or other origin, pose a serious threat to the protection and promotion of universal human rights values. Governments, individuals, groups, institutions and non-governmental organizations are called upon to apply their efforts, take the necessary steps and cooperate in dealing with this threat;

10. Africa, which has chosen the path of democracy, economic reform and the promotion of human rights, in an unfavourable international economic environment, and which finds itself particularly exposed to internal tensions deriving from the failure to meet the basic needs of populations and from the rise of extremism, will neverthless remain committed to its choices and its responsibilities, and calls upon the international community to do likewise, in particular through an intensification of international solidarity, an adequate increase in development assistance and an appropriate settlement of the debt problem;

11. Africa, which remains committed to respect for individual human rights, also takes this opportunity to reaffirm the importance that it attaches to respect for the collective rights of peoples, particularly the right to determine their own future and to control their own resources. Accordingly, it condemns the persistence of apartheid in South Africa and the gross and systematic violations of human rights due to foreign occupation, particularly in Palestine and in the other occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, the armed conflicts in Somalia and the policy of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and reaffirms the right of all peoples to self-determination and free choice of their political and economic systems and institutions, on the basis of respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

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